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ABSTRACT

The examination of literature and language instruction for gifted senior high school students begins with an explanation of the philosophy of such an instructional program. Each general discussion of subject matter content (literature and language) is followed by specific examples of how to develop higher intellectual skills in each area. Additional chapters treat the kinds of students gifted in English, operational and administrative procedures in conducting literature and language programs for the gifted, and the evaluation of English gifted programs. (KW)

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Teaching Gifted Students Literature and Language in Grades Nine Through Twelve

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Max Rafferty — Superintendent of Public Instruction Sacramento, 1970

Teaching Gifted Students Literature and Language in Grades Nine Through Twelve

Prepared for the

DIVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
California State Department of Education

by

MARGARET NICHOLSON, Mira Costa High School
ARABELLE STUBBE, Aviation High School
GERALDINE WADHAMS, Mira Costa High School
MARILYN WHIRRY, Mira Costa High School
South Bay Union High School District

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FOREWORD

The public schools of California are charged with providing ample opportunity for every girl and boy of school age to become knowledgeable in the basic subjects and proficient in using the basic skills of learning. It is equally important that the educational programs offered by the schools be of sufficient scope and depth to permit each young person to learn at the rate and to the full level that his ability permits. The special preparation that is needed for going on to college or for entering occupational fields after leaving high school must always be available.

In conducting educational programs, the schools are responsible for adopting practices that are flexible enough to allow whatever adjustments are required to meet each student's need of special education. The talented are among those for whom such adjustments are necessary. Recently the State Department of Education directed and coordinated a federally funded project for the development of curriculum materials of the type needed for the education of gifted children and youth. The materials, which reflect the best thinking of people who are well qualified both by education and by experience, are innovative and professional.

This publication, one of a series, is concerned with the teaching of literature and language to mentally gifted students in grades nine through twelve. Not only teachers but also administrators, consultants, and other professional personnel who are interested or involved in helping talented minors are invited to examine it. The concepts and suggestions contained in it merit thoughtful consideration.

Max Rafferty

Superintendent of Public Instruction

PREFACE

This publication, which was planned and completed as part of a project under provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title V, is intended to assist teachers of mentally gifted students whose general mental ability is in the top 2 percent of all girls and boys. It is also recommended for use by administrators, consultants, and other professional personnel who are involved in helping talented minors at the high school level.

Teaching Gifted Students Literature and Language in Grades Nine Through Twelve is one of a series of curriculum materials that are designed for the following educational levels: grades one through three, four through six, seven and eight, and nine through twelve. Consideration is also given to curriculum content at the kindergarten level. These materials were prepared under the direction of Mary N. Meeker, Associate Professor of Education, University of Southern California, and James Magary, Associate Professor of Educational Psychology, University of Southern California.

Also developed as part of this project is a series of curriculum guides for use in the teaching of eight subject areas to mentally gifted minors in elementary and secondary schools. The guides include practical suggestions regarding approaches and techniques that might be used to advantage in particular subject fields. These materials were prepared under the direction of John C. Gowan, Professor of Education, and his assistant, Joyce Sonntag, Assistant Professor of Education, both of San Fernando Valley State College.

A curriculum framework designed for use in developing programs for mentally gifted minors in California schools was developed during the course of the project. This major document, also prepared under the supervision of Dr. Meeker and Dr. Magary, is concerned chiefly with the objectives, principles, and curricula that should be given close attention in planning and implementing programs for mentally gifted children and youth.

LESLIE BRINEGAR
Associate Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Chief, Division of Special Education

PAUL D. PLOWMAN
Consultant in Education of the Mentally Gifted; and Principal Project Coordinator

JOSEPH P. RICE, JR.
Chief, Bureau for Mentally Exceptional Children; and Project Director

IRVING SATO
Consultant in Education of the Mentally Gifted; and Associate Project Coordinator

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Chapter 1

Philosophy of the Instructional Program

The art of refining the written and the spoken word is essential to man – indeed, to his survival. That the art is highly complex is proved by the habitual and historical failure of human beings to communicate coherently with one another. Therefore, no task in teaching gifted boys and girls is more significant than that of teaching them the function, the use, and the delight of language and literature. Our obligation as teachers of English is to pass on to the brightest and quickest of our youth the tools at hand so that they may use these tools and perfect them to the mutual benefit of themselves and their fellowmen.

This publication, then, proposes a basis for the study of language and literature during the high school years. The nature of this effort is built upon our philosophical past, our democratic principles, our literary heritage, and our great needs in a swiftly changing world.

Principles and Viewpoints

The philosophical principles that seem most appropriate to the teacher of the gifted student in English are eclecticism and pragmatism. An eclectic approach will allow for selecting doctrines from different systems of thought and will accommodate the numerous attitudes of the students in any given classroom situation. If one were dealing with abstract thought rather than the real beliefs of real people, the juxtaposition of doctrines from various systems could result in incoherence. In the reality of the classroom, however, an eclectic spirit should enhance learning. Moreover, eclecticism should prove an effective safeguard aginst rigid adherence to any single philosophy – even one as eminently useful as pragmatism.

It its present-day application, pragmatism has particular relevance for the teaching of English. Horton and Edwards *(12)*[1] describe

[1]Italicized numbers in parentheses appearing throughout all the chapters refer to entries in the list of "Selected References," which appear at the end of the document.

pragmatism as a philosophical method that is inductive, scientific, and nonabsolutist. Thus, the framework of today's ideas may require revision because of the discoveries of tomorrow. A concrete example of such a required revision in the field of English is the recent adaptation of linguistic theory to the teaching of language. The pragmatic theory allows for the individualized approach to language – an approach which recent studies have shown to be most effective for the student who may be gifted in symbolic and figural areas rather than in the semantic.

If a pragmatism that is tempered with an eclectic spirit is a viable philosophy for the teaching of English, then certainly its principles should be even more applicable to the teaching of gifted students whose verbal skills and sensitivity to literature are often their distinguishing talents.

These philosophical considerations have been operative wherever schools maintain diversity within unity. Two seemingly incompatible concepts – idealism and opportunity – often merge to shape American institutions. In education, for example, the *ideal* of accounting for individual differences is held just as high as the *opportunity* of offering as much schooling as possible to the masses. Education for the gifted, then, can be seen as one method of handling individual differences. Moreover, as Milton Gold *(8)* points out, "it is not the gifted group, but each gifted individual within the group who must seek to find himself and express his potential."

How can schools provide a stimulating program for gifted individuals so that these goals may be realized? More specifically, what guidelines can we establish for teaching English to gifted students in grades ten through twelve or in grades nine through twelve? The answer to the second question need not depend on the answer to the first. Although the best environment for gifted students – or students of any ability level – is one in which the curriculum is geared to individual differences, any teacher capable of identifying even one gifted child can alter a rigid course of study to provide for that child's development. As the secondary school has the responsibility to plan suitable programs for all students, so it has the responsibility to plan programs for the gifted in which advanced instruction will flourish.

Grouping for Gifted Secondary School Students

Depending on the philosophy and size of a given school, gifted students are generally grouped in one of three ways: (1) in a selected class for the gifted; (2) in scattered homogeneous "college-bound"

classes; or (3) in scattered heterogeneous classes. The NEA report of 1960 *(Gold, 8)* proposed "ability grouping, with small seminar groups for students in the top 3 percent." Despite arguments that such grouping causes a "brain drain" or "leadership lag" which adversely affects other classes in a school, teachers of honors classes in English often demonstrate that the gifted student thrives and performs best in an environment created to challenge his potential. At any rate, individual differences will still need attention, even in a select group of gifted students.

Diagnostic tests will help determine individual differences, strengths, and deficiencies. These tests should be interpreted so that the students are made aware as soon as possible of their accomplishments in given areas. Through an understanding of the nature of his own intellect, the gifted child in English can discover outlets for his own special giftedness. Diagnostic tests given to a group of gifted students will help the teacher individualize his program for specific objectives.

Diagnostic tests, however, are imperfect instruments for making a true evaluation of the gifted student. To understand the student more fully, it would be wise for the teacher of the gifted in English to conduct a personal interview with the student before the start of the class. This would aid the teacher in acquiring an understanding of attitudes and interests of the individual boy or girl. It would also enable the teacher to examine the literary backgrounds of the student and to build upon the foundation which is already in evidence.

The Standard of "Standard Usage"

Although language is recognized as a system of conventional spoken or written symbols, any given language has hundreds of conventions within its own system. Furthermore, these conventions shift with time and space. The "standard usage" (probably best defined as the conventions of speaking and writing used by the prestige group within a culture) of 1890, for example, has many archaic if not obsolete features. The historical and cultural concepts that help us understand how to use our own language are clearly important for all students; but the gifted should be able to apply these concepts when these young persons are given the opportunity to study their language in depth. The inductive approach to the study of usage will demonstrate the importance of recognizing "levels of usage" rather than holding to one rigid standard. Naturally, what follows is the adjustment of usage to the situation. In some

subject areas where the level of usage may be inhibiting a gifted student from full realization of his potential for expression, the historical-cultural approach to language should prove especially effective. Once the gifted student is fully aware of levels of usage, he should be taught to employ the idiom that is suitable for his own expression.

Composition in Relation to Usage and to the Art of Rhetoric

Just as there are different policies determining the grouping of students in English, so are there different curricula established for the teaching of English. Some schools offer alternate semesters of composition and literature;[2] others give a series of literature courses (in sequence or in options) during which composition is taught in conjunction with the reading assigned. Whatever the approach, neither the utilitarian nor the aesthetic aspects of English can develop in a cultural vacuum, and certainly creativity grows not from symbols but rather from the individual's need to symbolize.

Creativity for the Gifted in English

David Holbrook *(11)* writes that if we expect to introduce creativity into an English program, we "cannot separate words from the dynamics of personality, nor from the processes of symbolism [literature] by which human beings seek to deal with their inward life." In order to foster creativity in gifted students, teachers of English must respect and encourage the creative efforts of individual students. Creativity is not just one aspect of English; it forms the basis of our language and literature. Because life, language, and literature are interrelated, the English teacher must know and make use of the relationships in order to help students release and realize their creative potential. Teachers must know the art of language and literature and must, as Holbrook suggests, value "creative exploration themselves."

Organization for Learning and Instruction

The eclectic-pragmatic philosophy safeguards creativity by allowing alternate plans to flourish. For example, several young learners may benefit most from independent study plans; some may profit

[2]These are merely examples of curricular approaches. The "separateness" of instruction regarding composition, literature, and language is opposed in the *English Language Framework for California Public Schools – Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (California State Department of Education, 1968). See Chapter III, "The Unity of English," pp. 31-46.

from a conventional classroom organization; and others may find their place in small-group seminars. With some suggestions from the teacher, each of these plans is feasible within the enrollment of one class. The student working alone might be perfecting a composition technique, or he might be working on a task as advanced as determining the significance of etymology to the understanding of a particular poem. Whatever his choice, each student learns at his own pace and according to his own particular interests, and the ideal learning situation would be one in which each young person is given the opportunity to *choose* to learn. This concept seems significantly vital for the gifted student of English. The encouragement of divergent thought and interest should be foremost in the commitment of the teacher. The gifted student needs unscheduled time to pursue his own projects as well as time simply to think. In essence, the gifted student of English needs a program of individualized instruction.

Chapter 2

Subject-Matter Content: Literature

The course of study in literature for the gifted will not differ much from that of any other general course of study in this subject area. Nevertheless, gifted students read more widely and more perceptively than do the nongifted, and they enter high school having been exposed to a variety of literary types; for example, stories, myths, tall tales, and fantasy. Their response has been primarily an emotional one to the surface of the work; their feelings are derived from vicarious experience or enhanced by personal experience; and they have given little heed to design or structure. It follows, then, that the task of the English teacher of gifted high school students is to open other literary doors: to broaden the scope and increase the depth of the students' reading through the selections offered, the techniques revealed, and the philosophies encountered – in short, to effect a total engagement of these learners with mature literary experience.

Organizational Approaches to the Study of Literature

No single organization of literary study will accomplish this objective of total engagement. Each type of organization, however, can make a significant educational contribution, and the adoption of one type as a base or frame does not and should not exclude the use of ample reference to the other types. Because the highly complex process of creating involves innumerable factors and because the passing of time affects the reader's perception, the attaining of an appreciation of the totality of a work must come through a synthesis of varying approaches. Current trends in the teaching of literature, unlike our present disparate practices in language instruction, indicate – as the Commission on English *(6)* points out – that, for the time, consensus exists on the content of the curriculum in English for the gifted as well as for the nongifted. Four basic organizational approaches can be discerned: (1) using history and

chronology; (2) using genre; (3) using textual analysis; and (4) using theme or idea.

Use of History and Chronology

Organization of the study of literature by history and chronology falls into two categories:

Surveys. Surveys – particularly those of English, American, and world literature – permit the student to follow the development of a literary tradition and to study authors and periods, as well as the literature itself, in their proper perspective. Surveys should focus on a limited number of works that are not only significant in themselves but also representative of a literary period. The presentation of detailed, uniformly selected gleanings from the past with little or no regard for artistic value or cultural development has no place in a high school curriculum. Such misplaced emphasis inhibits the student's training in the close reading of single works.

Specific studies. Another kind of historical-chronological organization entails focusing on a single period or age, instead of surveying a whole culture or cultures. Representative course titles might be, for example, "The Elizabethan Age," "The American Frontier," "Modern Literature," "The Age of Romanticism." Organizing the study of literature by periods enables the student to become aware that a piece of literature is not written in isolation. Compared to surveys, such courses tend to be more eclectic in approaching subject content, if only because the student is not required to make a long journey through time to confront and appreciate a specific historical objective. Characteristics of the period chosen and the changes thereof are traced chronologically from the beginning to the end of the preset historical timetable. Again, the focus should be on the individual works that make up the period rather than on the period per se if awareness of the literary process is to be a significant goal.

Use of Genre

A second method for organizing the study of literature is the use of genre, which includes poetry; drama; the novel; the short story; the essay; the fiction subgroups of satire, parody, allegory, and myth and fable; and the nonfiction subgroups of biography, autobiography, and the article. Some of these classifications overlap, and any one could belong to several of the genres. The study of genre is the most direct means of fulfilling the affirmation in the *English Language Framework* that "the differences and similarities among the various forms become an explicit . . . concern of the program in

literature." *(5)* Certainly the gifted student's literary awareness should include a recognition of the effects that are wrought through the discipline of a particular form adopted by an author.

Use of Textual Analysis

A third approach to literature is that of textual analysis. This kind of analysis must be predicated on the intent to get at what is being expressed by examining the internal relationships of a literary work. Analysis that does not lead to *understanding of meaning* is an exercise in futility. The high school English program should be particularly rich in opportunities for gifted learners to analyze and synthesize written expression in a quest for meaning, message, theme, and purpose. The following outline of fundamental tools for critical analysis is recommended:

I. Structure
   - A. Form
   - B. Plot
   - C. Movement
   - D. Character
   - E. Point of view
   - F. Setting

II. Style
   - A. Allegory
   - B. Symbol
   - C. Metaphor
   - D. Imagery
   - E. Satire
   - F. Irony
   - G. Paradox
   - H. Versification (for poetry)
   - I. Sound patterns

III. Language
   - A. Diction
   - B. Punctuation
   - C. Sentence construction and length

IV. Relationships of the foregoing (I, II, III) to one another

V. What is the meaning derived?

VI. What is the critical judgment?

Use of Theme or Idea

Lastly, and importantly, literature can also be organized around themes or ideas. Although the gifted learners should know that a work of literature is an art that can be appreciated for its own sake, an even more valuable task for them is to examine the truth of an author's imitation of life. Exploration of the elusive nature of truth in comedy and tragedy will unfold for them man's foibles and man's greatness. The emotion evoked by a literary product should be thoroughly explored, not as if the product were a moral tract of

prescriptive significance but, rather, a medium of education in the humanistic tradition.

Practice of the Literary Craft

As the gifted young individual in high school studies the styles and themes of great writers, he should also write extensively. As he writes, he should let literature provide models for his instruction in matters of style; and he should let the ideas in literature and the development of these ideas provide or suggest the material about which he writes. He needs opportunities to become skilled in doing creative writing and analytical writing, in making comparisons and contrasts, and in using research techniques. He should consciously practice the writer's craft as he discovers the subtleties of that craft. In doing so, he will achieve greater insight into and respect for the complexity of literature while exercising his own creative powers.

Foundation Outline for Teacher and Student

The following outline serves to summarize the important facets of subject-matter content in literature as discussed in this chapter and also provides a set of base lines for further literary instruction, study, and practice:

I. *Facts that should be assimilated by the student:*
   - A. The vocabulary of literary analysis
   - B. Definitions of the kinds of genre
   - C. Basic components of each genre
   - D. Historical-cultural events, past and contemporary, that relate to a literary work
   - E. Facts about an author's life that relate to the production of a piece of literature

II. *Concepts:*
   - A. Critical reading involves the process of analysis and synthesis.
   - B. Restraint is the most significant attribute of style.

III. *Generalizations:*
   - A. Skill in making literary judgments increases as experience with literature increases.
   - B. There are many valid approaches to the study of a work of literature.
   - C. Gifted students need many kinds of experiences in writing.
   - D. The literature program for the gifted must be of practically unlimited breadth and depth.
   - E. A prescribed list of readings for the gifted cannot be written.

F. Because of their ability to follow sequences and develop ideas more fully, gifted students should write fewer but longer papers than should nongifted students.

IV. *Understandings:*

A. Interpretations of literature are subject to historical change.

B. The older the literature, the more important it is to know the historical content for the sake of understanding the literature itself.

V. *Principles:*

A. A definitive analysis of a literary work cannot be written.

B. Literature is a verbal art.

C. Literature elicits emotional, intellectual, and psychological responses.

D. The total effect of a work of literature is greater than that which can be discovered by the reduction of the work into its various components.

Chapter 3

Subject-Matter Content: Literature – Specific Examples

Depending on the interest and ability of the individual student, programs in English should offer a variety of orientations. Dozens of titles for courses in English could be listed; but all of these could be regrouped according to their manner of organization, as follows:

1. Language study through grammar and semantics
2. Literature by genre, chronology, or theme
3. Literature by genre – involving chronology, theme, and language through textual analysis and composition
4. Language study through composition, based on rules of rhetoric and semantics

One of the most rewarding programs for the gifted student is the one that integrates language and literature. The richness and variety of material in such a program should provide an opportunity to apply J. P. Guilford's research concerning the five general functions that are involved in intellectual operations: cognition, memory, convergent thinking, divergent thinking, and evaluation. *(10)* A sample unit in modern drama, with suggestions for the development of higher intellectual skills, can be outlined as follows:

I. Subject-matter content: generalizations
   A. Basic components of drama
   B. Historical and cultural background for modern drama
   C. Historical and cultural events, past and contemporary, that relate to each play
   D. Facts about the playwright's life that relate to his creation of a particular play

II. Subject-matter content: specific selections for a study of modern drama from mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, with the thematic consideration of illusion and reality
   A. *The Wild Duck* by Henrik Ibsen
   B. *The Sea Gull* by Anton Chekhov

C. *The Lower Depths* by Maxim Gorki
D. *Miss Julie* by August Strindberg
E. *Six Characters in Search of an Author* by Luigi Pirandello
F. *The House of Bernarda Alba* by Federico García Lorca
G. *Juno and the Paycock* by Sean O'Casey
H. *The Devil's Disciple* by George Bernard Shaw
I. *Waiting for Lefty* by Clifford Odets
J. *The Petrified Forest* by Robert Sherwood
K. *The Time of Your Life* by William Saroyan

III. Subject-matter content: specific playwrights recommended for independent study projects

A. Suggested listing (in alphabetical order – no priorities indicated):

1. Edward Albee
2. Maxwell Anderson
3. Jean Anouilh
4. James Baldwin
5. Samuel Beckett
6. Bertolt Brecht
7. Anton Chekhov
8. Jean Cocteau
9. Noel Coward
10. T. S. Eliot
11. John Galsworthy
12. Federico García Lorca
13. Jean Genet
14. Jean Giraudoux
15. Maxim Gorki
16. Henrik Ibsen
17. William Inge
18. Eugène Ionesco
19. Arthur Miller
20. Sean O'Casey
21. Clifford Odets
22. Eugene O'Neill
23. John Osborne
24. Harold Pinter
25. Luigi Pirandello
26. Terence Rattigan
27. William Saroyan
28. Jean-Paul Sartre
29. George Bernard Shaw
30. Robert Sherwood
31. August Strindberg
32. Thornton Wilder
33. Tennessee Williams
34. William Butler Yeats

B. Other playwrights of comparable stature

The three basic skills of English – reading, writing, and speaking – can be developed through the study of modern drama. Advanced skill in all three areas will have to be built on the acquisition of specialized information through the processes of cognition, memory, and convergent thinking. The following outline may be found helpful:

I. Acquisition of vocabulary and background information needed in a study of drama depends on listening and reading for information.

A. Sample vocabulary

1. Drama
2. Comedy
3. Tragedy
4. Tempo
5. Parallel scenes
6. Inciting force
7. Exposition
8. Climax
9. Falling action
10. Denouement
11. Characterization
12. Symbol
13. Motivation
14. Tone

B. Background information
   1. Greek and Roman drama
   2. Miracle and morality plays
   3. Elizabethan drama
   4. Commedia dell'arte
   5. Romanticism
   6. Naturalism
   7. Expressionism
   8. Realism
   9. Impressionism
   10. Surrealism
   11. Lives of playwrights
   12. Historical data pertinent to the study of specific plays

II. Vocabulary and information will also grow with the reading of each play; for example, Chekhov's *The Sea Gull*.
   A. Typical vocabulary for *The Sea Gull*
      1. Motivation
      2. Characterization
      3. Allegorical representation
      4. Psychological complexity
   B. Typical information for *The Sea Gull*
      1. The Russian theater
      2. Chekhov's life and work
      3. Contemporary Russian social history

III. Oral skills can be developed through the study of drama.
   A. Oral interpretation of scenes or of an entire play will provide the opportunity for oral expression and also serve to promote understanding.
   B. Discussion of the play will allow for convergent, divergent, and evaluative thinking.

IV. Skill in English usage and composition can be developed during the study of drama.
   A. Students will gain practice in English usage as often as they write compositions.
   B. Students will gain practice in composition through writing essays that demonstrate their ability to interpret, analyze, and evaluate the plays being studied.

Suggestions for Developing Higher Intellectual Skills

Although the emphasis here is on the stimulation of higher thought processes, we should remember that these processes must be predicated on the assimilation of facts. In studying drama, for

example, students must know the play before they try to evaluate the behavior of one of the characters.

For the teacher of gifted students, either Guilford's system *(10)* or that of Bloom *(21)* should prove helpful as a guide for developing higher intellectual skills. Both systems demonstrate an orderly pattern of thought from concrete to abstract. Because studies have shown that gifted learners possess the ability to handle abstractions, these young people should be given every opportunity to increase their competence in that area of mental functioning. The opportunity will present itself whenever the teacher makes good use of a system of questions.

In the following examples, which are based on the study of modern drama, Guilford's system is used as a guide for questions and suggested learning activities. Much the same questions could be classified according to Bloom's taxonomy; but for the sake of convenience, Guilford's system will be applied here to several plays.

A DRAMA GUIDE FOR QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Intellectual operations	Sample questions and suggested learning tasks
	The Sea Gull (Chekhov)
Cognitive-Memory	How does Chekhov suggest Treplev's hostility toward Trigorin?
Convergent thinking	What is the function of Sorin in Act II?
Divergent thinking	Discuss the play as a commentary on attitudes toward art and literature.
Evaluative thinking	Is Masha's confession to Trigorin (Act III) properly motivated?
	The Lower Depths (Gorki)
Cognitive-Memory	Identify the structural elements.
Convergent thinking	Point out any irregularities in normal structure.
Divergent thinking	Discuss the basic theme of Gorki's play. Identify the dominant tone (e.g., hope, despondency, despair). What message or messages do the characters seek to convey?
Evaluative thinking	How is this play naturalistic? What about it is not naturalistic?
	Miss Julie (Strindberg)
Cognitive-Memory	Cite specific speeches to demonstrate naturalistic elements in the play.
Convergent thinking	What three aspects of life do the three characters represent?

Divergent thinking	What do the references to the dog and the bird mean?
Evaluative thinking	Is the behavior of the characters consistent with their philosophy?
	Six Characters in Search of an Author (Pirandello)
Cognitive-Memory	What is the difference between "character" and "man" as used by the father?
Convergent thinking	Contrast the position of the son and the father in the play.
Divergent thinking	What views of art and reality are being expressed in the scene between the manager and the actors?
Evaluative thinking	What comment does the play make on human communications?
	The House of Bernarda Alba (García Lorca)
Cognitive-Memory	What hold does Bernarda have over Poncia?
Convergent thinking	What is the dramatic function of the grandmother?
Divergent thinking	Is the situation portrayed unique to the culture? Discuss possible analogies.
Evaluative thinking	To what extent do the references to colors help develop the tone of the play?
	Juno and the Paycock (O'Casey)
Cognitive-Memory	Explain the references to yoga and theosophy.
Convergent thinking	What is the function of the music and the prayers used in this play?
Divergent thinking	How is the "Irishness" of this play created?
Evaluative thinking	Discuss the positive or negative effects of O'Casey's stereotypes.
	The Devil's Disciple (Shaw)
Cognitive-Memory	What is an "obtrusive moralizer"?
Convergent thinking	Show how Shaw's stage directions and character introductions make us see him as an "obtrusive moralizer."
Divergent thinking	By extension, what comments is Shaw making about contemporary society, even though the play concerns the American Revolution?
Evaluative thinking	Discuss the validity of the attacks Shaw makes on specific social, religious, and political attitudes.

Rather than repeat the patterns of operations for other plays, the authors of this document offer the following detailed explanations of the processes involved in the last series of questions *(The Devil's Disciple).*

Cognitive-memory activities involve the reception and reproduction of material. After reading Shaw's play, students should be able to demonstrate that they have retained the facts and ideas within the play and even those facts and ideas that bear upon an understanding of it. For example, in introducing the learners to George Bernard Shaw, the teacher will have included the fact that this playwright has been called an "obtrusive moralizer." To reproduce this information, the student will need only to remember what he has heard; however, to demonstrate his understanding of the term, he will have to go to the dictionary or rely on his teacher's explanation. In either case, he should be made aware that the term is a significant one in the study of Shaw and of many other authors. James J. Gallagher *(7)* reminds us that without basic information the student cannot proceed to more advanced thought. The discussion of the following category concerns that issue.

Convergent thinking is the process in which the student collates facts and ideas in order to bring them together in some kind of right or appropriate answer that is more or less agreed upon. In arithmetic, of course, reasoning problems provide a clear demonstration of straight convergent thinking. In literature, on the other hand, the "right" answer is often "more or less agreed upon." The convergent-thinking question proposed here concerning Shaw's stage directions and character introductions can be reasoned as follows:

> Playwrights who use extended stage directions and character introductions are called obtrusive moralizers.
>
> Shaw is a playwright who uses extended stage directions and character introductions.
>
> Therefore, Shaw is called an obtrusive moralizer.

Note that the logical process here depends on the student's understanding of the term "obtrusive moralizer." The syllogism here should raise other questions. What do we mean by "extended" stage directions? Are they merely longer than those of normal expectation? Both the learners and the teacher must analyze and discuss the text of the play so that their reasoning *converges* toward an agreed-upon understanding of obtrusive moralizing. Naturally, there can and should be some overlap into divergent thinking during this process.

Divergent thinking is the kind of intellectual operation whereby students bring into play a large number of problem-solution associations. Freedom of thought is encouraged, of course. Note that in the question concerning Shaw's comments about contemporary

society, the student is invited to see all the possible analogies between two periods in history. Another question could then be asked: Could a playwright living at the time of the American Revolution have written such a play? Individual exploration and inquiry are stimulated by such questions.

Evaluative thinking. These intellectual operations are not mutually exclusive, nor do they necessarily follow an ascending order; that is, a student engaged in discussion might ask an evaluative question before sufficient time has been provided for convergent and divergent thinking. However, the responses in evaluative thinking will prove more rewarding if adequate time is given to the collection, interpretation, and speculative handling of data. Thus, satisfying responses (to the student as well as to the teacher) to the question concerning the validity of Shaw's attack on certain religious, social, and political attitudes require a fund of background knowledge, previous experience in discussions of issues related to literature, and further guidance from the teacher. For example, the teacher may need to ask questions that will help students to see that the "validity test" has to be applied in the context of a time period. The conditions existing in Shaw's time that might have made his attack seem valid did not necessarily exist in Revolutionary times, nor do they necessarily exist today. Conversely, time does not of itself alter human attitudes. Here is an excellent opportunity to discuss the relative merits of the reality of art and the reality of life.

Composition and Intellectual Operations

Although little has been written on the relationship between Bloom's or Guilford's system and the student's ability to write compositions, one can assume that in general the intellectual skills developed in productive oral discussion can be transferred to a student's written work. Whether composition is taught in a separate course or is integrated with the literature program, boys and girls will write good papers when they are aware of the importance of presenting accurate data in a well-reasoned manner. Demonstrating their skills in divergent and evaluative thinking through the medium of the written word is one expression of creativity that is characteristic of the gifted.

The most advanced learners will be capable of developing, and should be encouraged to develop, their own topics for composition. However, even gifted students often seek suggestions for topics; to deny them help on the theory that they should be totally independent would be no more productive than to require that all

students adhere rigidly to the same topic. The short annotated list of topics that follows suggests ways in which the same intellectual operations mentioned earlier can be utilized:

1. Discuss the use of dramatic irony in *The Sea Gull.* Development of this topic will depend upon the student's knowledge of the play and his understanding of irony (cognitive-memory operations). Supporting his statements with evidence that he chooses from the text will call for both convergent and divergent thinking. As he concludes his commentary, he will need evaluative thinking to decide upon just what "use" Chekhov made of dramatic irony.

2. State in comparative terms Ibsen's, Gorki's, and Pirandello's attitudes toward illusion and reality. Here the emphasis is upon the kind of convergent thinking that makes much use of data, but the student will also need to use his powers of divergent thinking if he is to have an original approach to the subject.

3. Although *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Devil's Disciple* are very similar (both contain irony, humor, and content involving revolutions), the tragedy in the former is resolvable; the bitterly ironic statement of the latter is not. Discuss the similarities and the differences. Here is a topic that clearly challenges the student's ability to use all the higher intellectual skills. Not only must he grasp facts and ideas and evaluate them, but also must he control the special rhetorical devices of comparison and contrast.

After the hesitant student has had some experience with topics like these, he is less reluctant to try to develop topics of his own. While some teachers of the gifted still deal in quantity rather than in quality as they plan courses and assignments, most teachers have discovered that the quality of the learning experience for the student is paramount. Thus, the gifted student might wish to prepare several small, well-thought-out papers, or he might (and he usually will) prefer to explore a topic of his choice in some depth. Again, the student may have a plan of his own he wishes to pursue with intensity, or he may seek suggestions about a plan. In the course with which this publication is concerned, most students like to have a list of suggested playwrights so that they can choose one for an independent study project. In conference with the teacher, they decide on the requirements for the project, which usually includes the following tasks:

1. Read a play by a writer whose name appears on the suggested list (or, outside the list, a play of comparable quality).
2. Write an analysis of this play. The analysis should include the following:
   a. Structure: tempo, parallel scenes and contrasting scenes, inciting force, exposition, climax, falling action, denouement
   b. Character: motivation, reality, temperament
   c. Theme: how stated? (through action, characterization, symbol, and the like)

d. Tradition in which this play fits: traces of former dramatists, its influence on other plays, its prevailing style (romantic, expressionistic, other)

e. Tone

3. Include a short (not more than one-page) critical biography of the playwright.

Suggestions for the Development of Creativity in Literature

Few teachers today would relegate creativity to a course labeled "Creative Writing." The concept of the creatively gifted child is too well known for that. However, we should remind ourselves that the creatively gifted student does not always "create" a tangible product in art, music, drama, writing, or others. It is true that his creative ability will often find expression in the arts, but he is just as apt to excel in divergent thinking and to demonstrate skill in finding new solutions to old and new problems. If teachers want to develop creativity, they must not act as inhibitors – either of creative expression or of divergent thinking. The preceding description of a unit in modern drama is a suggested sample of a favorable learning environment for the gifted learner, creatively or otherwise inclined. But there are some kinds of activities (which teachers can introduce) that will encourage creativity in those who seem to lack it and that will further stimulate those who are already well endowed.

The examples given here are tied to specific units, but a teacher could allow individuals or groups to develop personal "favorite-interest" projects outside of the units being studied. The important quality for the teacher to manifest is the sincere desire to receive the product of the student. This quality does not mean that praise shall be forthcoming for every effort. On the contrary, if the proper rapport has been established, the creatively gifted youth will welcome criticism. The examples follow:

A. A project for developing creativity in discussion – Herman Melville's short story, "Bartleby the Scrivener," and the theme of isolation:

1. Acquaint the class with either Guilford's system or Bloom's system of intellectual operations.
2. After the class has read the Melville short story and before the students discuss it, divide the class into groups of four or five members each.
3. Ask each group to design questions according to whichever system has been introduced. Ask the students to focus particular attention on one topic (isolation, alienation, Melville's Dickensian humor, or whatever).
4. Obtain "feedback" from the groups during the last 20 minutes of the period. The reactions can be handled by having one member from each

group come forward to join an informal panel discussion of the questions developed.

The self-awareness and self-realization built into such a discussion project can prove especially helpful if the gifted learner has previously experienced an inhibiting classroom environment; certainly in this kind of discussion everyone has an opportunity to express his own ideas. And for the student who has always enjoyed freedom of expression, an acquaintance with patterns of intellect will induce new organization of his own thought processes.

B. A project for developing creativity in expression – the social milieu of the twenties as reflected by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Frederick Lewis Allen:

1. Have individuals or groups read Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*, and Allen's book, *Only Yesterday*.
2. Ask the students to compare and contrast fact and fiction in class discussion.
3. Encourage the learners to find other contemporary sources – especially those that describe the music, art, and fads of the era.
4. Ask the students to write a script that uses lines from the works of Fitzgerald, Allen, and others. Have the script read aloud.
5. Encourage the learners to provide appropriate illustrations and music for an oral presentation of the script, which should probably focus on a particular theme; for example, the emancipation of women.

The possible variations of this project are limitless. Naturally the same kind of project can be set up for any work of fiction. Furthermore, some students will wish to follow a plan whereby they can explore all the strictly literary aspects of a work. Again, the teacher must remain just as flexible in helping students to plan projects as in designing a daily lesson plan.

C. A project for developing creativity in synthesis – twentieth century poetry; music, art, and poetry as multimedia experience:

1. Ask individuals or groups to select poems representative of the twentieth century.
2. With the use of audiovisual equipment (opaque projector, tape recorder, slide projector, and movie projector), have the students create visual and musical interpretations of the poems chosen.
3. When the projects are ready, ask the students to present their "products" to the class. An oral interpretation of a particular poem (a) may be prerecorded and played back to the class; or (b) may be given "live" at the time of the presentation.

The sophistication of the products varies with the talents of the students. Those who have unusual creative ability will truly synthesize their media, giving new interpretations to works of

literature. Others will merely illustrate the poem with appropriate pictures and music. In either case, students will be participating in creative experiences that bring them very close to the use of multimedia techniques so popular in contemporary life.

Chapter 4

Subject-Matter Content: Language

As with literature, the language course of study for gifted students will not differ greatly from the subject matter taught to nongifted students. Rather, it will need to have a different focus. The emphasis here should be placed on the relationships among various phases of language study. Also, more time should be given to materials that stimulate intellectual curiosity than to the accumulation of facts. With these stipulations in view, the following sequence would be in order: (1) grammar; (2) semantics and critical thinking; and (3) language history.

Current Approaches to Grammar and Syntax

Grammar should be studied, but not from the standpoint of exercises and drills. There are three current approaches to grammar and syntax, and each should be investigated and understood.

Traditional grammar is still with us and should be approached from a theoretical basis. Its roots in Latin should be exposed to the students. The ways in which it sets rules for writing and speaking, as well as its prescriptive qualities, should be understood; and the inadequacies of this approach for actually describing much of the English language should also be discussed.

Depending on what the student has already been exposed to, this instruction should be followed by an introduction to, or a review of, structural linguistics. The relationships between traditional grammar and structural linguistics should be made clear; the prescriptive and descriptive qualities of this second approach should be discussed; and the strengths and weaknesses of the structural approach should be assessed.

The third approach is the completely linguistics-oriented transformational-generative grammar. This method attempts only to describe language and to account for the ways the human mind hears words and sentences and then translates this aural experience into

speech and writing. The relationship of transformational grammar to symbolic logic and its concern with regional and ethnic variations leads directly into the second major phase of language study – semantics.

Semantics and Critical Thinking

Semantics, in the sense of words and ideas, is simply a catch-all term for the entire area of language operation outside of the field of literature, although even this distinction does not hold true in all situations. Nevertheless, a consideration of the ways in which language operates in the world is one that must involve all three areas of language study – reading, writing, and speaking; and it is imperative that students be involved in all three areas at all times.

The basic approach to semantics should be that of an introduction to the tools of critical thinking. A possible sequence for this introduction would be (1) inductive and deductive logic; (2) propaganda techniques; (3) levels of diction; (4) style; and (5) tone. With respect to each of these aspects, the major consideration should be the fostering of self-awareness in the learners. This objective is most easily accomplished by having the students carry out frequent assignments in expository writing. The assignments should demonstrate understanding of these devices by explication, imitation, or a combination of both.

Inductive and deductive logic in relation to reading, writing, and speaking constitutes, perhaps, the most basic body of knowledge necessary to the investigation of actual language operation. Once a student is aware of the various errors that occur in each form of reasoning, he becomes more aware of his own and other people's mistakes. In recognizing clear thinking, he also comes to recognize clear writing and speaking on his part and on the part of others.

Propaganda techniques provide a natural opening for the consideration of mass media. The students should study all kinds of media in which propaganda can and does exist. In the consideration of magazines, newspapers, television programs, and films, various kinds of propaganda methods should be analyzed. The motivation for such techniques should also be investigated; and the necessity for reading, listening, and viewing with an open but alert and critical mind should be emphasized.

When gifted students approach the study of *levels of diction,* which are so closely related to their own abilities to write for a variety of audiences, they should also approach the linguistic discoveries. They should acquaint themselves with various dialects

prevalent in the United States and with vocabularies that are the particular property of certain regions, trades, and groups. They should also investigate the kinds of difficulties that arise when an individual changes either area or audience, but not vocabulary. Writing experiences of these kinds should include interpretation of the actual collection of spoken material, discussion of the appropriateness of various levels of diction, and examination of various types of vocabularies.

Style should be considered in two distinct ways. First, a student's growing awareness of his own developing writing skills should be emphasized through frequent writing and rewriting experiences and through the opportunity to correct his own and other students' work. He should also be afforded the opportunity to discuss his writing style on a one-to-one basis with his instructor if he so desires.

The second consideration of style should be through an introduction of the three ways in which critics approach this elusive entity. The classical approach to style as "ornamentation of ideas" may lead the student to believe the theory – and he should experiment to see if it holds true for him – that styles can be changed as often as one's coat without altering context. The second approach, so popular a few years ago, upheld the idea that in order to change one's style, one must change one's character. This notion should lead to some interesting investigations of contemporary nonfiction. The third approach – that style is inextricably involved in content and cannot be separated – leads to the inability to discuss style as a separate function at all and should bring a sigh of relief to the lips of many bright students.

For gifted learners the study of *tone* should serve as a culmination of all of the other aspects. Here all of the rhetorical tools come into play as the student attempts to determine what effect a writer wishes to produce. He must also be aware at this time that his own choice of language, the audience for which he is writing, and the attitudes he himself holds affect the tone of his own work.

Still another area that should be considered under the general heading of language operations would be the use of tools necessary for effective oral communication. Methods and techniques of argumentation and debate should be introduced and should also be related to the study of mass media and to the students' own expository writing. The learners should have opportunities for panel discussions, simple factual reports, dramatic readings, and – if the interest and need exist – specialized courses in speech and drama.

Language History

Finally, before the gifted student's high school course of study in English is completed, he should be introduced to a history of his own language. With this introduction to the Indo-European language family, the course comes full circle. Gifted learners should be encouraged to investigate the composition of the roots of the English language and the amazing similarities that exist among all members of the Indo-European language family. In so doing, they can come to appreciate the highly complicated process that human communication involves.

Foundation Outline for Teacher and Student

The following outline serves to summarize the important facets of subject-matter content in language as discussed in this chapter and also provides a set of base lines for further language instruction, study, and practice:

I. *Facts that should be assimilated by the student:*
   A. Grammar
      1. The vocabularies relative to each of the three approaches to grammar
      2. The processes by which sentences are prescribed, described, or generated
   B. Semantics and critical thinking
      1. Definitions of terms used in the study of logic
      2. Definitions of propaganda devices
      3. Identification means for levels of diction and dialects
      4. Tools for the improvement and correction of composition
   C. Language history
      1. Geographic distributions of world languages
      2. Structure of the Indo-European family of languages
      3. History of the formation of English
      4. Changes in English since it first emerged as a language
      5. Varieties of English that now exist

II. *Concepts:*

From a study of all these areas, several concepts basic to all language study would emerge.

   A. Language is not a static thing.
   B. Man can control the effect of his language on his fellowmen.
   C. Language is often generated by other than rational processes.

III. *Generalizations:*
   A. Precise thinking increases precise writing skills.

B. There are many equally valid methods of approaching the study of language.

C. A knowledge of the theory and the history of language increases a student's appreciation of its power and complexity.

IV. *Understandings:*

A. All varieties of language dialects, vocabularies, and levels are equally important.

B. Errors in logic are frequently the result of psychological mind sets.

C. Good writing is achieved most frequently through an understanding of the tools for clear thinking, the tools for composition, and an ability to discern one's own errors.

V. *Principles:*

A. The principles of language operation are similar to those of many other disciplines.

B. Man must use language with careful consideration of audience and effect.

C. Change in language is often the result of factors that are social, economic, or political.

D. Exposure to the theories of language and language operation is one way to ensure awareness of the complexities of language and to increase the effectiveness of its use.

Chapter 5

Subject-Matter Content: Language – Specific Examples

Here again, it would be advantageous to utilize the system of intellectual operations advocated by J. P. Guilford *(10)*. That of Benjamin Bloom and his associates *(21)* can also be used. In this chapter a sample unit in logic is proposed, and two outlines are suggested. The first outline follows:

I. Subject matter content
   A. Inductive reasoning
   B. Deductive reasoning
   C. Logic fallacies
      1. Name calling
      2. Glittering generality
      3. Transfer
      4. Oversimplification
         a. "Either-or" assumption
         b. Universal positive and universal negative
      5. False analogy
      6. Suppressed, distorted, or irrelevant evidence

II. Accompanying readings for specific analysis
   A. Richard D. Altick, *Preface to Critical Reading* (Fourth edition)
   B. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes stories (e.g., *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*)
   C. Bergen Evans, *Natural History of Nonsense* (available in paperback)
   D. E. M. Forster, *Two Cheers for Democracy* (paperback)
   E. Patrick Henry, "Speech Before the Virginia House of Delegates," March 23, 1775
   F. Darrell Huff and Irving Geis, *How to Lie with Statistics* (available in paperback)
   G. Plato's dialogues (e.g., *Apology, Crito, Gorgias, Laws, Meno,* and *The Republic*)
   H. William Shakespeare, Marc Antony's oration from *Julius Caesar*

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I. Max Shulman, "Love Is a Fallacy," a short story in Shulman's book, *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*

J. Mark Twain's essay, "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences"

The three basic language skills – reading, writing, and speaking – can be developed through the study of logic. The second outline for this chapter, intended to aid in this development, is suggested as follows:

I. *Acquisition of vocabulary and background information*

A. Sample vocabulary

1. Connotation
2. Denotation
3. Beginning the question
4. Euphemism
5. Card stacking
6. Circumlocution
7. Deduction
8. Induction
9. Generalization
10. Glittering generality
11. Name calling
12. Jargon
13. Major premise
14. Minor premise
15. Hypothesis
16. Innuendo
17. Objectivity
18. Propaganda
19. "Red herring"
20. Syllogism
21. Transfer technique
22. *Post hoc*
23. *Ad misericordiam*
24. Hypothesis contrary to fact
25. *Dicto simpliciter*
26. "Poisoning the well"
27. Valid
28. Sound
29. Abstract
30. Concrete

B. Background

1. Essentials of connotative and denotative language
2. Importance of context
3. Levels of diction
4. Intent of the writer
5. Consideration of the audience to be reached

II. Oral skills to be developed

A. Argumentation and debate skills

B. Speeches intended to persuade or to inform

Suggestions for Developing Higher Intellectual Skills

At this point, Guilford's system *(10)* is used as a guide for the following list of suggested learning activities that concern the study and use of logic. Certain tasks and projects for the gifted students are listed according to the types of intellectual operations that are mainly involved.

Cognitive-Memory Operations

- Describe the scientific method of reasoning.

- Outline the systems for constructing syllogisms.
- Define one of the logic fallacies that have already been discussed.

Convergent Thinking Operations

- Supply the missing parts to constructed syllogisms.
- Create syllogisms out of prose paragraphs.
- Bring examples of false syllogisms based on faulty reasoning.
- Write a paper demonstrating the method of deductive logic.
- By adjusting the relationship of the X and Y axis, show how evidence may be distorted in graphical presentations.

Divergent Thinking Operations

- Write a composition in which you develop your material by means of inductive logic. Your conclusion must be no stronger than the evidence presented.
- Defend a political position to which you do not personally subscribe.
- Discuss the dangers of error between sender and receiver when symbolic or metaphoric language is employed.
- Consider the varieties of personal and cultural meanings for words such as *democracy, teenager, love.*
- Write down and then analyze the thoughts you have for the next 15 minutes. Account for the logical and associative responses you have made.

Evaluative Operations

- Discuss E. M. Forster's reasons for withholding the "third" cheer for democracy.
- Analyze your current textbooks for logic fallacies.
- Evaluate three magazine reports of a single "news" incident.
- Demonstrate the soundness of an editorial or political statement.
- Analyze the logic of the written portion of a magazine advertisement.
- Take notes on and discuss the logic of a sermon preached in your church.
- Collect and analyze levels of diction existing in your own peer group.

The Roles of Aesthetic Valuation and Linguistic Analysis

It becomes apparent that certain skills in reasoning and in composition must be taught apart from literature; that is, for the purpose of instruction, the aesthetic valuation of a piece of writing may sometimes be secondary to linguistic analysis. Even though much contemporary communication is nonliterary, the teacher of the gifted must introduce his students to the evaluation of magazine, television, and radio media. This is not to say that artistry does not exist in these media; in fact, the artistry may appealingly disguise the content for the unaware. The end of any linguistic study must be an understanding of and an appreciation for the skilled and craftsman-like presentation of unique but universal ideas.

Chapter 6

Descriptions of Kinds of Students Gifted in English

Each gifted student is an individual with his own interests, abilities, and personality – all of which contribute to the complex phenomenon called giftedness. However, aside from the uniqueness of each individual, many gifted learners do have certain common characteristics according to which these learners can be grouped for descriptive and prescriptive purposes. Four student categories with respect to the language arts may be designated as follows:

1. The universally high achiever
2. The creatively gifted
3. The nonconforming gifted
4. The underachieving gifted

An examination of a particular composite of each type should develop insight into the kinds of giftedness that may be found in any English classroom housing gifted students.

The Universally High Achiever in Language Arts

Jill Anderson is a vivacious girl who shows more-than-average vitality and energy in all she does. She enjoys using her mind but accepts her intelligence as something quite ordinary. At times she is surprised to find that everyone is not as intelligent as she. In a classroom situation Jill easily leads the discussions, or at least she contributes to them in a vital way. The girl readily accepts ideas or suggestions for discussion topics or essay topics; but when she is given the opportunity, she often produces ideas of her own. If an opinion is expressed by another student or by the teacher, Jill will sometimes accept it heartily; but just as often she will advance opinions of her own. Jill is intensely interested in all areas of English, and almost any assignment seems to be undertaken with willingness.

Her capabilities and her abundance of interests move into areas outside of the classroom. Jill is active in leadership activities, in

athletic endeavors, and in several of the expressive and creative arts, such as drama and music. In all areas she exhibits the same ability to lead, the same ability to concentrate and to produce her best, and the same ability to form her own opinions and judgments and to act accordingly.

A teacher has no difficulty in approaching a student like Jill; in fact, teaching a learner such as this one is a joy. Whether introducing a literary topic thematically or introducing it historically, the teacher will find enthusiastic response from this young person, as long as the material to be covered offers some depth and challenge. This type of gifted learner will also see the need and the value of written expression and will attempt to write with clarity and precision. She will also, most likely, enjoy an analysis of literature and will experience great pleasure and excitement when she discovers the unfolding unity of a work of art through the examination of all its parts. Because of this girl's unusual interests, capabilities, and personality, the teacher will be glad to present fresh materials that will stimulate Jill's mind and start her down new paths of endeavor.

The Creatively Gifted English Student

Greg Taylor's creative ability in English has always been recognized. Records from his elementary school show that he was consistently reading years ahead of grade level. When Greg entered high school, his interests became increasingly specialized. Now he reads omnivorously and selectively. He writes creatively. One of his recent projects was to write a poem a day for one month; this project was submitted to the National Council of Teachers of English and helped to win for him an achievement award. More recently he wrote, produced, and directed an original play meritorious enough to bring him a special award for creativity.

His English teachers have found that Greg needs little direction or correction in composition; his usage and spelling are flawless. However, because his specialized interests – drama, poetry, and fantasy fiction – absorb much of his time, he finds it difficult now to complete assignments in English and in other subjects as well. He is much admired by his fellow students, who consider him a creative genius; he is also liked by faculty members and counselors, who appreciate his ability but also understand some of the problems he faces as a highly individualistic, creatively gifted person.

A slightly different description could be written for each of several other varying types of creatively gifted English students, but

the generalizations based on this case would probably apply to all of them. These generalizations can be summarized as follows:

The gifted student with creative ability in English shows:

1. Exceptional talent in one or more areas of written English – the essay, poetry, drama, fiction
2. Sensitivity to literature through written and oral discussion
3. Ability to look through time and space and perceive analogies in many facets of culture
4. Self-awareness and determination to be an individual

With these qualities of the creatively gifted student in mind, one should ask: What English program that would suit him best can the school offer? The answer must consider the creatively gifted student's trait of individualism. He will *not* pursue areas of study that hold no interest for him; but when he follows what interests and attracts him, he flourishes.

An English program that offers many electives for credit in English would seem well suited for the creatively gifted student. Too often elective classes in speech, drama, and journalism are offered in addition to and outside of the English curriculum rather than as part of it. Some schools are now offering options in many specialized areas of English: Twentieth Century Fiction, Chaucer, History of English, and so on. If educators design courses that are suited to the needs of each type of gifted student, then the creatively gifted, as well as all students, will have the chance to perform to their maximum.

The Nonconforming Gifted Student

The gifted student who does not choose to conform to an organized curriculum is seldom nonproductive, as the underachiever is apt to be; in fact, the former usually suffers from overproduction. This is the student who cannot face ordinariness and conventionality, who cannot become engaged in "what everyone else is doing," and who cannot prevent himself from finding many alternate assignments for himself – projects of a greater number and variety than his instructor could even imagine. This student – let us call him Jeff – is usually language-oriented, although this orientation may not relate directly to the field in which he is most involved. Jeff's interests may vary from constructing electrically controlled tide pools and making model airplanes to writing plays, verse, and asides to the teacher. He is sufficiently aware of the system of academic awards and punishments to maintain excellent marks in achievement, but these

marks are often maintained at the expense of his respect for that system and for many or most of his instructors.

It is the responsibility and frequently the joy of the teacher of this gifted student to aid and abet his originality. While an entire class may be wrestling with the relationship of versification to meaning in the poetry of T. S. Eliot, Jeff may very well gain much more by writing a "fifth" *quartet.* While other students are writing an analysis of the motivation of Hamlet, Jeff may be gaining the same kind of insight by writing his own play, producing it, and struggling with the difference between words on paper and words that are spoken.

To put it in another way, this kind of learner will not long be challenged by the emphasis on literary analysis that is so common in advanced English courses. Indeed, he may resent the traditional "digging and poking" that is often required, although his own intelligence spurs him to dig and poke without the use of inhibiting labels and constrictive guidelines. His forte may not be critical analysis, although his perceptiveness and his tastes may be impeccable. Therefore, he should not be forced into writing, year after year, the same kinds of analyses, nor should *any* student; rather, he should be given leeway to produce analyses of a more original cast and to make written contributions that are more truly creative.

This kind of student, perhaps above all others, gains most from and contributes most to an individualized study program. This program should not be one in which he simply chooses his own reading material and then decides on and writes about a topic related to his reading. On the contrary, the program must allow him, with the aid of his instructor, to define and set for himself more creative and more original goals.

In Jeff's case, the most important role that the teacher plays is one of encouragement, availability, and a gently prodding kind of authority which insists that the goals established for the boy are met. This role is essential because so often the Jeffs of the world start 17 projects with the greatest good faith and find that time and energy are not sufficient to finish even one project well. Moreover, the Jeffs of the world are most likely the ones who edit the literary magazine, star in the school play, devise their own language, work in the biology lab, and then wonder where their time has gone.

To stifle the native curiosity in this type of student, or to put down his rebellion against tedium, would be to turn him against the humanities and against English in particular. He may never need to meet with a class, although frequently he may choose to do so because of the verbal contests that are involved in class discussion;

conversely, he may need to meet with his teacher frequently. In these meetings the topic of literature or language may never come up, but the chance just to "bat the breeze" about ideas may be far more fruitful to this learner than formal instruction. So Jeff should be allowed freedom but not license; he should be cautioned against undertaking more than he can do well; and he should eventually be counseled to enter a university that will encourage rather than stifle his talent, his curiosity, and his variety of interests.

The Underachieving Gifted Student

Consider next a boy whom we will call John Carver, who is a gifted underachiever. John loves literature and responds to it perceptively. He possesses original talent, for he writes poetry – undisciplined poetry, to be sure – but his choice of imagery is quite remarkable. John's grade-point average is very low; he has failed several classes; he has completed little of the "required reading" for his current English class and none of the writing. Because of his lackadaisical academic record, he is ineligible for his school's English honors program although he is brighter than many students in the program. After a particularly troublesome day, John has been heard to cry out, "I don't think I can stand it [school] much longer!"

Teachers of English have known others like John. The discrepancy between the measured intelligence and actual performance of certain gifted learners indicts many of our current educational programs as being seriously remiss. What are the needs of gifted young people of this type? How can English teachers awaken themselves so that they, in turn, might awaken these talented but troubled students?

Research abounds in descriptions of the bright underachiever. Authorities agree that among gifted underachievers, the boys greatly outnumber the girls. Many come from broken or unhappy homes. The pattern of underachievement begins early: for the boys it is clearly discernible by the third grade; for the girls, by the seventh grade.

Several studies appear to indicate that the amount of underachievement accelerates through the high school years. Study habits are notoriously bad. The underachiever finds it impossible to concentrate on anything for very long. He abandons a project before completing it, only to begin another one, which he likewise abandons. He has few goals and no vocational ambition. He identifies strongly with no one – not parent, teacher, or peer. He does not like to compete. He lacks confidence in himself. Certainly he does not consciously choose to be an underachiever, but he is helpless to effect a change.

Description is a first step, of course, but unless it leads to a course of action for the English teacher, or for any other teacher, the step is futile. How the underachiever sees himself is of primary importance; therefore, helping him to develop a positive self-concept is the task with which the English teacher should begin. The instructor must accept the underachiever, at first and at least, on the underachiever's own terms. Above all, the instructor must never launch forth with judgments concerning the personality, attitudes, or literary tastes of his charge. The underachiever needs warmth, acceptance, and understanding – and more of the same.

This young person needs an environment rich in learning stimuli, particularly many books which he may peruse and study according to his own plan. He needs freedom of choice regarding subject matter and freedom of physical movement as well. He needs generous doses of honest praise and encouragement as he makes his first tentative journeys into achievement. There are no instant cures for underachievement, but it is possible even late in the high school years to awaken the gifted underachiever to the exercise of his considerable talent. Inasmuch as the monotonous routine of traditional English teaching may very likely have contributed to his frustrations, it is the responsibility of educators to change traditional methods when that change is of solid benefit to the distressed teenager who has so much potential. Otherwise, his talents are lost to himself and lost to our society, which, at this stage in its development, has greater need of creative, educated men than ever before.

Individualization of the English Program

Implicit in all that has been said in these descriptions of specially gifted young people is the necessity for individualizing the English program. An English elective can be taken by one student or by many students; and if it is offered to many, each should be able to choose different options within its framework.

There are numerous ways to individualize an English program for the gifted; for example, if above-average students are enrolled in honors or advanced placement classes, they have many opportunities for self-realization and for the release of creative potential. Enrollment in such classes is usually small; and the teachers in these classes are trained to recognize and encourage all kinds of giftedness and are qualified to render the kinds of instruction and guidance that are needed.

A school might choose to establish an independent study program for a number of its students. This kind of program would be

particularly suitable for the learner who is highly motivated to be creative only in a specialized field.

All these programs depend upon an imaginative administration and a staff of qualified teachers committed to excellence in education.

Chapter 7

Operational Procedures in Conducting Literature and Language Programs for the Gifted

Students who are gifted in language-oriented fields are frequently regarded with distrust by school personnel because of their highly developed verbal skills and their willingness to take issue sometimes with "established" ideas and with the establishment itself. It is incumbent upon the educator to encourage healthy freedom of expression and to make superior achievement an acceptable and sought-after goal.

Administrative Support

The most important administrative function with respect to the teaching of literature and language – or any other subject – to gifted students is the projection of a sympathetic and supportive attitude. Without the trust and the backup of school administration, any program designed for gifted learners is doomed.

Functions of the High School Counselor

Similarly, without the trust of the high school counselor, no program for the gifted can hope to succeed. He, like the administrator, plays an important role in such a program by carefully selecting those gifted boys and girls who will benefit from it. He directly influences the building of that program because he identifies the gifted and assesses their needs. The counselor's function of distinguishing and planning with and for the gifted increases as a school's enrollment rises and as the school tends to become depersonalized. Frequently he acts as an intermediary – more so in proportion to school growth and expansion. The following are the services the counselor can perform to assist the English program for the gifted:

Identification. By means of administering tests, taking inventories, and perusing records of achievement marks and other objective data, the counselor finds who the gifted are.

Guidance. Once the gifted in English are identified, the counselor guides them to an awareness of their special talents and plans with them how best to develop these talents for each student's pleasure and use. Because he is knowledgeable about the content of the school's English program, he can advise his counselee wisely.

Communication. The counselor invites the gifted students to discuss freely with him their honest reactions to the literature and language experiences offered by the school, and he communicates these responses ethically and diplomatically to the English teacher. In accordance with his findings, he may suggest to the teacher certain alternatives, avenues of enrichment, or changes in the English curriculum for one gifted individual or for groups of gifted students.

Implementation. As the adviser on matters regarding entrance to college, the counselor can open several doors for the gifted. He helps find the "right" college appropriate to a particular student's ability, achievement, and financial status. The counselor actively seeks scholarships for those who are in financial need and advanced placement for those who might profit from such placement.

Evaluation. By means of follow-up studies, comparisons and evaluations of marks, and other kinds of analyses, the counselor helps to measure the outcomes of the English program for the gifted.

Selection of Teachers of the Gifted

Just as the counselor must be responsible for the selection of the gifted student and his judgment and data must be trusted, so must there be an acceptance of all facets of an educational program for the gifted. The general acceptance of programs designed for the gifted means granting sufficient freedom to the teachers involved in such programs to decide where, when, and how often these young learners should meet, what they should be taught, and how the materials should be introduced. At the same time, this freedom puts the burden of success or failure squarely on the shoulders of the teachers of these students. It is most essential then, that administrators make wise selections of the professional people who will teach the gifted and, once the selections have been made, that they exhibit confidence in the persons chosen.

Too frequently the selection of personnel for instructing advanced, enriched, or honors classes is a matter of seniority in the school department involved. Sometimes, unfortunately, the teachers who have been at their jobs the longest are not aware of current novels, poems, plays, and criticism in their own field. These teachers,

moreover, may be less likely to enjoy experimentation, flexibility of schedule and assignment, and the generally casual give-and-take of classroom activity that is based on inquiry rather than on presentation of information.

Requirements for Effective Instruction and Successful Learning

Although competence in the discipline of English is a prerequisite for teaching the gifted, just as important is the capacity of the teacher to understand and to respect individual differences within any group of gifted students, as well as his ability to work effectively with each individual. The teacher must also strive to be open-minded in his approach to the likes and dislikes, to the tastes and distastes, of the gifted learners under his charge.

Perhaps the entire notion of giftedness needs to be expanded in the mind of the teacher. He must remember that individual students will be slightly gifted or highly gifted; that they will be gifted generally or gifted in one area alone. Through an acceptance of the singular merits and capacities of each gifted learner for what they are in themselves, the instructor can gain the trust of the individual. When this trust has been developed, the gifted student (1) will be able to work confidently and with self-respect; and (2) will be better able to understand his own strengths and weaknesses.

The teacher of the gifted learner must constantly remind himself that the importance of his work lies not in what he can give to the student but what the student can accomplish by his own power. Indeed, the teacher must present a learning situation in which the students are free to explore, discover, and create to the full measure of their abilities. While it is true that the ultimate considerations concerning curriculum rest in the hands of the teacher, the classroom should remain one where both the teacher and the student can learn to make decisions about the program in which they are participating. The classroom must be a place where independent learning and growth can come about and where, under the guidance and direction of the teacher, intellectual excitement can thrive. Freedom to investigate and to challenge existing ideas must be present and must be valued. As Eugene Howard *(13)* remarks, "Premium, not penalties, must be placed on thoughtful heresy."

Certainly, if a teacher can accomplish all of the tasks identified here and if he has, through the confidence of the school's administration, the ability and the freedom to innovate and to experiment, he remains the most meaningful constituent in the

teaching of gifted students in the English program – indeed, in any program or curriculum.

A Suitable Environment for Student and Teacher

It is also essential that an optimum environment be provided for students and teachers. Whereas the teaching of English does not demand expensive laboratory equipment or special kinds of ventilation and electrical equipment, it does require a variety of kinds of space and good access to audiovisual facilities. Reading, which is generally the most heavily weighted activity in an English course, is something that is usually done in private; but the fruits of that reading are public activities. To this end, facilities should be provided that enable students to meet in groups of two, ten, 20, or 200. In fact, it becomes difficult to define exactly, in a program for gifted students that is predicated on self-direction and individualization, the place or the excuse for a classroom of "traditional" or "average" size.

A multipurpose room, a number of study carrels, several seminar rooms, a small theater and a stage, an office for each teacher – all of these are important to the operation of a successful program. Desirably, these facilities should be the sole property of the English department so that spontaneous small-group discussions would not have to be scheduled several days in advance in order to accommodate another department's activities. The importance of doing things, of engaging in large- and small-group activities when the need arises, cannot be underestimated. Although any good teacher and any eager group of students can "make do" with nearly any kind of physical arrangement (the lawn is frequently a fine place), appropriate facilities tend to improve the chances for meaningful experiences.

The cost of such special facilities should not be prohibitive; in fact, such items are being included more and more often in budgets for new schools. The use of the facilities should certainly not be limited to the gifted student but should benefit the department as a whole. In many instances it has been found that the upgrading of any phase of a course of study results in a general upgrading of the entire course of study; and the addition of flexible facilities would assuredly add to the flexibility of teaching methods in all phases of the English program, not just to that of teaching the gifted.

The Need for Special Funds

There are certain parts and aspects of the English program for the gifted that require additional funds. It is essential, of course, that

school administrators understand and support the concept that high-quality education does not come cheaply.

To begin with, class size has often been a stumbling block for the English teacher; and when the teacher deals with gifted students, sometimes it becomes a wall. As each student, with his particular talents, gifts, and needs, progresses in his education, the amount of time which must be devoted to him alone becomes greater. Working with the gifted entails, certainly, smaller-than-average classes, as does working with retarded students; the problems of the two groups may differ greatly, but the methods by which they are solved are not so different.

Another facet of the English curriculum for gifted students involves the funding of special programs within the framework of the course of study. The concern here is not with the sum of money available from state sources for mentally gifted minors – a sum which is frequently eaten up by expensive testing and research projects and which must be shared with other departments in the school. More pointedly, these special programs for the gifted in English should be operated within the English classes. Money should be provided for enrichment experiences; some experiences that would be profitable to these students would be attendance at plays, art exhibits, films – all of the worthwhile cultural activities that the community makes available. Too often students have neither the transportation nor the funds to avail themselves of such opportunities. Moreover, all too frequently boys and girls in many communities and neighborhoods do not have the impetus or the courage to attend cultural events by themselves. This kind of activity for the less fortunate young person – for the culturally and economically deprived student – is most important. One bright spot on the cultural horizon for such students, and certainly not limited to the gifted, is the newly formed Inner-City Cultural Center now in operation in Los Angeles. The Center's program was instituted primarily for the benefit of the city schools in Los Angeles, but because of the Center's liberal student admission policies and its excellent choices of plays, the program could be of great use to all school districts in the greater Los Angeles area.

Another operation that falls under the heading of funding of special programs is the College Entrance Examination Board's advanced placement examination for high school seniors. This examination enables the gifted student to eliminate freshman English courses from his college program – courses which he may not need because they often contain material equivalent to or simpler than

that of his recently completed senior honors English class in high school. The cost of such an examination is rising every year. While more and more students are becoming qualified to take it, a number of bright students do not take it because of the cost.

The last and most pressing factor that requires special funds for gifted English students is the need for money to buy books – books that are not likely to be used in other English classes, books that would not be read by students in other subject fields, but books that would challenge the intelligence and imagination of bright learners whose special talent lies in the province of the magic of language. Money should be made available to procure these books and to assemble special libraries for the gifted users. Several copies each of many such books should be on hand, rather than the traditional "class sets" of only a few titles. It would be unfair to the rest of the English curriculum to allot department funds for this small but special group of young people unless funds are allocated to the department with this particular need in view.

Freedom of Choice in the Reading Program

The matter of freedom of choice in the reading program is an important one. Realizing that discretion and good taste must be exercised by all teachers when they choose reading materials for groups of students, the administration should trust the teachers engaged in the program. If the instructors have been wisely selected, it is unlikely that risks will be involved. The issue of censorship in the schools has been widely discussed, but the problem still exists. The well-qualified teacher who feels free to recommend books without the fear of administrative disapproval will not take advantage of his freedom by introducing hard-core pornography or trash into the curriculum; rather, he will feel free to search out and include the best of current literature. To the end of providing the best possible education for the young, the choice of materials should be governed by the needs of a particular course in a particular school and by the needs of the boys and girls enrolled in that course.

Always relevant, then, to this matter of freedom of choice is the *quality* of the literature to which students are exposed in the public schools. It can reasonably be assumed that a well-qualified, highly trained, experienced teacher would not select or recommend material that would be less than excellent. Quite frequently in many censorship questions, evil rather than beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Rather than emphasize the fact that some books, some subject matter, some ideas are spurious and harmful, it would be more

helpful to the young if the teacher would use a positive approach – if he would motivate them to develop a sense of values as to what constitutes literature that is great, good, mediocre, or worthless. The gifted student, especially, needs ample opportunity to read significant books and to critique their merits or demerits intelligently. He needs the freedom to explore, under the skillful guidance of his teacher, the vast resources of the literature of his own language and that of other languages.

Much of the problem of censorship is directly related to the administration's function as a public relations center. It is the administrator who hears the complaints of the general public and of parents in particular. And it is as a public relations director that he plays his most active role as the supporter of a program for gifted students. Many schools require that complaints be submitted to the administration, in writing, and this practice seems especially germane to complaints dealing with reading material. Specific objections can be examined and dealt with on a rational basis.

Liaison with the Community

Beyond providing for a climate of freedom and inquiry, the administration should also provide a kind of favorable publicity liaison with the community concerning the nature and quality of educating the gifted student in the subject field of English, as well as the educational techniques that are used. This liaison means acquainting the community with the programs themselves more than anything else. If the students need to know the purpose of their training and the value of their activities, so do the parents need to know these things. Communication with the community will help to close the so-called generation gap. Understanding the program, the parents will find themselves participating in it vicariously, and they will be encouraged to *encourage* their frequently volatile, often "mysterious" gifted children.

Chapter 8

The Evaluation of English Programs for the Gifted Student

Since evaluation is an essential part of the educative process, certainly programs for the gifted must be evaluated periodically. Many systems of evaluation can be used to reach an evaluative conclusion about a particular course, unit, or sequence. Several are examined here.

Evaluative Methods and Techniques

To begin with, the teacher should observe carefully during the life of a course or unit whether or not the students are progressing successfully. For example, one type of observation involves the maintenance of a manila folder pertaining to each student in the class. The folder should contain such items as descriptions of projects in progress or completed, lists of things read, and written papers that have been graded. This device allows the teacher a simple, direct check of the accomplishments of every learner. In addition to the evidence contained in the folders, student progress can be measured qualitatively through conversations with the teacher in individual conferences or in group meetings. Needless to say, these conversations can be used only as partial guides or yardsticks for reaching judgments about specific programs.

Another device used for evaluation is the grading or marking system. Although grades are indeed variable, an overall increase in grade points in a particular subject might suggest some degree of success in that subject. Scores in standardized tests might also be examined. Each test should be regarded simply as another tool in the area of evaluation; the teacher, therefore, should not place too much weight on test results.

Still another type of evaluation of course content and success might be conducted after the student leaves high school. This involves sending an evaluation form to each past student, or interviewing him personally, so that this individual, on the basis of

his present outlook and understanding, can evaluate past classes. He can point out weaknesses and strengths which he was unable to see at the time he was enrolled in the classes.

A last type of evaluation – one that will be explained in some detail here – is that in which the gifted student evaluates a particular course at the time he is participating in it. The gifted learner is likely to be very perceptive about the advantages and disadvantages of special programs in which he may be involved. His own attitudes about these programs constitute an invaluable source of information for the teachers involved in helping the gifted, and these attitudes should be sought and considered when course changes and improvements are being undertaken.

A survey of the attitudinal type was made recently with two very different groups of gifted students in a single high school department.[1] The two groups, consisting of a nongraded section of underachieving gifted students drawn primarily from the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades and a section of gifted students enrolled in a twelfth-grade advanced placement class, were given the opportunity of evaluating their own learning experiences. The results of the survey brought to light some interesting similarities regarding the likes and dislikes of these two extremely diverse groups – similarities that could lead to some general suppositions about the most effective methods of teaching gifted students who are at any grade level and who manifest varying degrees of motivation.

The most frequent comment was that which concerned the advantages of being given the freedom to choose the literature they had read. Many students said that for the first time they felt that English was a joy and not something simply to be tolerated one hour a day, five days a week. They also felt that by being free to choose their own reading material, their tastes improved and they were more motivated to write about their reading experiences. Typical of comments of this kind are the following:

> The class develops an independence of spirit and a desire for knowledge rather than a desire for rebellion and a distaste for literature.
>
> You don't have the feeling of being pushed into a mold with everybody else. However, you do have a feeling of responsibility which is enjoyable.
>
> You learn to work for self-satisfaction rather than for a grade.

The next most frequent comment referred to the benefits of not having to report to class every day. The students almost unanimously agreed that working on their own and then returning to class to

[1] Mira Costa High School, Manhattan Beach, Calif.

discuss with the teacher and with other students the results of their independent study benefited them far more greatly than did staying inside a classroom five hours a week.

These young people also voiced their dissatisfaction with certain teaching practices too often employed in the present high school. They reported that listening to lectures day after day was of little benefit. They felt that the classroom situation should involve active dialogue – sometimes between student and teacher, frequently between student and student. Over and over they said that they do not want to be told what to think. Most frequently they said that the freedom to choose their own topics for written assignments led them to make relationships that they would not have made otherwise; it also allowed them to perceive analogies among several types of literature, to choose topics that compared several works they had read, and generally to experience the satisfaction of discovery.

The gifted learners also voiced the need for more small-group discussions. Aligned with this desire was the request for more individual conferences with the teacher – conferences most frequently directed toward discussing problems of composition. They felt that red marks on a returned paper were not of sufficient clarity or value to ensure improvement, but that a personal conference would be. It was surprising to note, moreover, that these students said they should be required to write more frequently under pressure – to have many timed writing assignments; in their opinion, this hard work would be good preparation for college. A final attitude toward composition – one that was revealed by many of the learners – was that they should be required to rewrite their papers more frequently, that polishing a given paper to the point of perfection was a valuable experience, and that rewriting a paper in a style different from that of the original was a good way to learn the writing techniques of various writers.

The respondents made many other suggestions that do not fall so easily into general categories but are nonetheless both interesting and valuable to teachers of these students. They suggested summer reading lists for all grade levels. They suggested in-depth creative assignments, such as writing a play when studying drama. They made many pleas for having *really* current novels, plays, and poetry brought into the curriculum; they said that such people as Rod McKuen, Leonard Cohen, Edward Albee, and Bob Dylan had something to say that directly concerned them. They were willing to accept the relevance of Sophocles and Shakespeare, but they wanted more freedom to include the less-established writers. They also expressed

the strong desire to take trips together to see plays and attend poetry readings and then to meet informally and discuss their experiences without waiting for the "right" class hour the next day.

By and large, what the teachers of these young people gained through this survey amounted to proofs of their own beliefs. These students were voicing the very real need of the gifted learner to be trusted to choose wisely, to discipline himself, and to form meaningful relationships with both his classmates and his instructors.

Tangibles and Intangibles

These suggestions for the evaluation of classes for the gifted student are by no means comprehensive. However, they do give to the teacher a starting place where his work and his students' work can be examined and a judgment can be reached concerning what has been done. It must be remembered by the student, the teacher, the counselor, the administrator, and the parent that in every type of experimentation there is bound to be failure as well as success. It is important to allow for a margin of error and a degree of failure in the planning of any program for the gifted. It must not be overlooked, however, that it is nearly impossible to measure such intangibles as interest, enjoyment, newly found self-confidence, or a desire to learn on the part of a student. These elements will not be absent from a successful program; indeed, in the long run they may be its most significant results.

Chapter 9

Summary Statement

In an exceptionally well-written book entitled *Linguistics: A Revolution in Teaching,* Postman and Weingartner *(17)* make two statements that are pertinent to the assumptions underlying the approach contained within this treatise in regard to the teaching of language, literature, and composition to gifted students. Discussing the methods by which linguistics should be considered and experienced, they write in Chapter 3:

> What is the discovery method of teaching and learning? It is, first of all, a prescription of the roles that teacher and students must play in the classroom. Specifically, it requires that the burden of intellectual inquiry be carried by the student, not the teacher or textbook. In the case of the English class, it requires that the students try to solve problems not unlike those that the linguists must solve. In other words, it requires that students become involved in processes of defining, question asking, data gathering, observing, classifying, generalizing, and verifying in matters of language. It implies that students play an important role in determining what lines of inquiry are worth pursuing and a pre-eminent role in determining what arguments and conclusions are worth embracing. [p. 37]

And later on, at the end of Chapter 4, they observe:

> . . . However, when approached in the ways we have described, it [the discovery method] is extremely valuable in helping students to learn about the processes of observing, classifying, and defining. It is useful in helping students to understand where knowledge comes from, and how and why generalizations change. It is particularly effective in providing students with a perspective on the nature of systems – the purposes of systems, the rules of systems, the underlying assumptions of systems. [p. 86]

Whether speaking of linguistics or speaking of literature, the teaching method that places its heaviest emphasis on the student himself, gives generous attention to the student, and shows confidence in the student is the one that seems most suited to the learning climate of gifted youth. The major forces that will engage and

motivate the bright learner are those forces that insist on his growing efficiency in manipulating the tools of inquiry and research; his independence in the selection of materials; his increasing ability to absorb, understand, and synthesize; and his judgment and skill in evaluating the materials he has chosen.

There is no attempt here to suggest that the teacher completely abdicate his role in the learning process; it is recommended, rather, that the teacher simply change his concept of himself as primarily a disseminator of information. Much has been written about the usefulness of educational resource centers. In any classroom containing gifted students, the most valuable resource center is the teacher himself.

The fact that a "classroom containing gifted students" is identified here leads to another assumption that underlies the material in this document: that gifted learners operate most effectively in homogeneous groups. These young people (1) seem less inhibited among peers who are endowed with capabilities similar to their own; (2) are not afraid to challenge one another; and (3) develop very little intellectual snobbery, an attitude that is often encountered in heterogeneous groups.

A third major assumption is that independent, individualized study for gifted students is not merely desirable; it is an absolute necessity if true learning is to take place. Gifted learners need to be free to explore widely in the realms of English – to have many language and literature experiences. They will not perform well when locked into the routine or the subject matter of a regular classroom. Their need to traverse swiftly or to mine deeply a particular facet of language or literature is the kind of need that must be nurtured if they are to grow intellectually, develop a strong sense of responsibility, and become wholly aware of the world in which they live.

A keen awareness of oneself and the society of man and a willing acceptance of the role he must play in his own learning processes are more important to the gifted student in the field of human communication than in many other fields. Mathematics and science are relatively closed structures, but the language that forms the basis for studies of English and English literature is neither a closed structure nor even a very stable one. Its relationship to the ways in which man gets along in the world is of such paramount importance that the burden of teachers in the discipline of English is no less than awesome. It is the province of these teachers to influence not only reading and speaking habits but also the overall attitudes of students who are in their charge. The gifted students are those individuals who

should be able to understand and to use the language most effectively, because it is *they* who have the facilities for making analogies between literature and the world in which they dwell; for generalizing on sufficient rather than insufficient data about their culture; and, hopefully, for asking the kinds of questions that will lead mankind to a better understanding of both his world and the processes by which he knows it.

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